

June 22, 2015
5:30 PM

The City Council of the City of Inverness met on the above date in **Special Session for Fire Services**, at 212 W. Main Street with the following members present:

President Hepfer
Vice President Ryan
Councilwoman Bega
Councilman McBride
Councilman Hinkle
Mayor Plaisted

Also present were City Manager DiGiovanni, Attorney Haag, Asst. City Manager Williams, and City Clerk Davis.

The Invocation was given by Councilman Hinkle and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by the City Council.

The meeting was called by the following Notice to all Council, Mayor, media, as well as publicly posted.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

DATE: June 18th, 2015

PLEASE BE ADVISED, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF INVERNESS, FLORIDA, WILL MEET IN SPECIAL MEETING ON **MONDAY, June 22nd, 2015 @ 5:30PM** AT THE 212 W. MAIN STREET, INVERNESS, FLORIDA FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING:

“ FIRE SERVICES”

/s/Jacquie Hepfer
President of City Council

ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA

Councilwoman Bega motioned to accept the Agenda as presented. **Seconded by Councilman McBride.** The motioned carried.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING

None

CITY MANAGER REPORT

Council President Hepfer commented on recently being questioned on **Ethics** regarding her voting on the Fire Services issue. She stated that when we voted to turn IPD over to the Sheriff, her daughter worked there, as well as her husband, and I was told it wasn't a conflict and I voted. We will be contracting with the County, not the Sheriff. She was

concerned with people throwing these things there and she is not happy. She stated that if she saw a conflict she would have brought it up, and we are not dealing with the Sheriff

City Manager DiGiovanni stated that this evening centers around the 1974 Voter Initiated Tax, an important mechanism with respect to being able to service and provide Fire Service. Last Tuesday, City Council motioned on the best way to proceed, and in doing so included the context of a letter from Sheriff Dawsy, which most of them didn't have. The letter was reviewed following the City Council meeting, and discovered a clause in the letter worded a way to move the City of Inverness from participation with the 1974 Voter Initiated Tax Program. Information has been assembled to help Council understand the complexities of last week's vote. The complexities alone are compounded due to people who were present at the meeting, publication in several news venues. Attorney Haag & I consulted and thought it best to have the City of Inverness convene to take action to further discuss the 1974 Tax Initiative and its importance to the COI, and take action to remedy that situation. Tomorrow, County Government has publically noticed that they are going to conduct a Public Hearing to discuss development of a third funding source for fire services (MSTU). We feel it important that the principals of the 1974 Tax be maintained and the City continue its participation with the 1974 Tax and vote accordingly, and the 1974 Tax not be taken to -0- as rumored.

Council President Hepfer asked that the City Manager explain the difference between the MSTU and the MSBU. He explained that the 1974 Voter Initiated Tax stands alone as a measure voted on by the public. An Municipal Service Taxing Unit (MSTU) has been provided to County governments to deal with Community Developments (ie; Sugarmill Woods, Citrus Springs, etc.), and if the community wanted urban like services the County could create this where the unit could have an MSTU levied to it to provide an urban like service, such as Fire Service, and further noted that an MSTU could go up, to 10 Mills. The Voter initiated Tax is capped at 1 Mill.

Councilman McBride stated that in his motion, when he referred to this matter in the context of the Sheriff memorandum date 9/18/14, it was never his intention to negate the benefits of the 1974 Voter Initiated Tax. I am not one to throw out \$260-300 hundred thousand dollars of anticipated revenue. However it was his purpose to indicate that there was a proposal overview that was attached to this memorandum which comes up with a level of service and a corresponding fee for that totals \$500,000. , with another letter \$490,000 handed out by Sheriff at June 2nd meeting.

Councilman McBride motioned to readdress the action by City Council on June 16, 2016, with respect to fire services to rescind that motion and vote. Seconded by Councilwoman Bega . The motion carried unanimously.

Attorney Haag stated that Councilman McBride's previous motion intent was that the City would come up with the additional funds, over and above the revenue raised by the 1974 Special District Tax to fund fire services for Inverness, which would be equivalent to the cost to individuals in the unincorporated area. That's the \$ amount that we would be negotiating with the County for the upcoming year.

Councilman Ryan motioned to deliberate the Fire Services to the City of Inverness. Seconded by Councilman Hinkle. The motion carried. (4 yes; 1 No)

Councilman Ryan clarified as to why he voted as he did for Fire Services at Thursday's meeting. You either pay the price now or pay a high price later. If we establish a fire service, it would be more consistent with the way the rest of the City governments in the county are operating, and be a source of pride. He stated he would like to have a cost comparison for projected costs of the start up and running of a Fire Dept.

City Manager DiGiovanni spoke to the diligence done with research on this over a 2yr. period. Municipalities tend to work together and they developed the Tri City Concept, with the City of Dunnellon –and Crystal River. Worked closely with Dunnellon, a like size City, and a good level of expertise. In putting numbers together, a number of things were considered, having to do with government working together, type calls and what the needs are. In preparing the numbers for the previous Council meeting, we showed \$450,000 which was a high number, and was well beyond what was necessary. He asked Dunnellon's Fire Chief, Joe Campfield to explain the methodology of how we came up with these figures and what they were based on, and his confidence in the ability of \$350-\$375 thousand to make this work.

Chief Campfield stated that he was extremely confident on the numbers put together for this council. He explained his background, and has been in fire service for 23 years and the Chief of Dunnellon for 18 years, etc. and is confident that those numbers are good.

City Manager questioned the capitalization of equipment needs, and what is based on. Campfield stated it was based on if you had nothing, and would be for used equipment, which is sturdy, what is needed to do the job. He provided estimates for the new state contract for a Class A, 4 door fire truck, which is currently \$188,000.

City Manager stated that he was basing this on his experience of 18-20 years. They spoke to staffing of paid and volunteer fire fighters and the stability of it. Chief Campfield stated that they work hard at recruiting, retaining volunteers, and getting the right volunteers.

It was noted that the operations were between \$360-\$375 thousand, with the initial start up to \$570 thousand for the first year, and what was presented was an evaluation of what would work.

City Manager DiGiovanni noted that the County will be discussing an additional funding source, (MSTU) at their meeting tomorrow for Ambulance Services, over and above anything with fire, which will not be levied in the City. The 1974 Tax can only be used for fire, while this additional funding source (MSTU) would pay for ambulance services.

Mayor Plaisted questioned the need for a ladder truck, and he understood that when you have adjacent government entities, everyone would pitch in. Chief Campfield noted that you would want to have a mutual aid agreement and noted that the county's ladder truck should be responding, and County Ladder Truck is partly the City's truck and should respond. He spoke to the types of vehicles needed for Fire Services in Inverness and the recommended replacement time. Chief Campfield explained that \$450,000 would be the regular budgeted amount with \$50,000 of that for Capital Improvement, so the operating would be approximately \$400,000.

Mayor Plaisted questioned how a Tri-City Agreement would benefit the cities and what the responsibilities would be. Campfield explained that other issues entered into the Tri-City, such as Water Treatment Issues, Bicycle Issues, etc. On the Fire side we were looking at personnel activity, volunteers and community development in helping each other out in time when personnel needed as well as the redundancy of units.

Councilwoman Bega questioned the amount of volunteers needed to handle the City? Chief Campfield noted approximately (3)career personnel/ (12)volunteers/ 5-6 pool staffing.

Councilman Hinkle motioned to authorize the City Manager to take any and all action to create a blended paid and volunteer Fire Department of the City of Inverness, with the assistance and support of the City of Dunnellon. Seconded by Councilwoman Bega.

Councilman McBride stated his concern that it is not uncommon to have everything cost more than you expect. I am looking at operations cost of \$400k with capital of \$50k to total \$450K. Also the possibility of bringing in fire services based on the level of service that we indicate in negotiations with City of Inverness and Sheriff Office, in the \$500k area. The \$50k difference is folding money and we would also have a well tuned, organized fire system, ready to go, and is the issue I am looking at right now.

Attorney Haag question if we are going to create our own Fire Dept, is the County willing to provide us our share of the Special Fire District Tax?

City Manager DiGiovanni noted enclosed correspondence where Mr. Oliver took a clear position the answer to be yes. Our question is, regardless of what direction the City takes, we have to make sure the County understands the importance of the 1974 Tax and that they maintain that tax at an appropriate level of taxation, otherwise it will be a fiscal dilemma. This is why we need to sit with the County, attend their meeting tomorrow and try to express to them, the stability that tax brings, to not only Inverness, but the whole county.

Attorney Haag stated that if the County goes to an MSTU and they throw EMS and Advanced Life Support into it, it will complicate this issue, as you will have two cities outside the MSTU funding advanced life support.

Mayor Plaisted stated that when looking at the overall picture, we have done our due diligence by looking at what has been done over the years. Inflated numbers were to give us a feeling of what we could do, and would be brought in under cost. We need to keep in mind the trust and stability of the Manager, staff, and City Council.

Councilman Ryan stated that we would be fiscally responsible to have our own Fire Department.

Councilman McBride stated that the problem we have across the board, is that there are many variables in this right now and we really don't know where we are going to be tomorrow at this time.

Council President Hepfer stated that none of us have run a Fire Dept. and the input I've gotten from residents has been that they don't want it. We need to work with County and have a meaningful conversation. She didn't think we are ready for a Fire Dept.

City Manager asked if the previous motion by Councilman Hinkle include the 1974 Tax, and asked if the motion could be amended to include the City's participation in the 1974 Tax.

Councilman Hinkle motioned to amend his previous motion, to include the 1974 Fire Tax District as part of the City retaining the 1974 Funding Tax. Seconded by Councilwoman Bega. The motion carried. (3 in favor; 2 opposed)

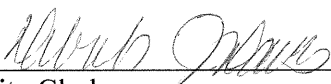
COMMENTS

Charles Knecht, Sr. 2410 W Spring Lake Dr Homeowners Association - spoke to Council regarding the original ordinance which was for 12 Fire Districts in Citrus County, with Crystal River and Inverness both having independent Volunteer Fire Service. He also spoke to the old Fire District Tax, and referenced the County MSTU, MSBU and the ALS Service. The 1996 Florida Statutes gave the County complete control over Ad Valorem taxes, and it was in 1974 was when referendum was voted on.

Ann Perry, Inverness, addressed Council and stated that she did not agree with us running our own Fire Department and didn't think it was the time to let go what we currently have, to build something that will cost money on second hand truck, etc. She feels safe with Fire Department currently in place, and didn't think it was practical.

Karen Esty, Inverness, addressed Council and stated that prior to voting on something as serious as serious and vital to this area, she thought it would be good for input from citizens that may not have been heard. She had concerns about equipment (Class A Truck, Grass Unit, etc.), and they need to look at the whole picture, i.e.; logistics, personnel, and monetary issues. She is confident in Dunnellon Fire Department to help us out. You have made your decision and she feels being independent is a fine thing for this City. Let's go forward and make the best Fire Department that we can have.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:50 pm.



City Clerk



Council President